



**Testimony of John Erlingheuser on behalf of AARP
in support of HB 5474
An Act Concerning the Autonomy of the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority
Energy and Technology Committee
March 15, 2012**

My name is John Erlingheuser and I am the Advocacy Director for AARP in Connecticut as well as the consumer representative on the Connecticut Energy Advisory Board (CEAB). AARP is a organization that helps people 50+ live their best life. We are a nonprofit, nonpartisan social mission organization with nearly 600,000 Connecticut members. Our mission includes support for affordable utilities. I appreciate the opportunity to testify this afternoon in support of H.B. 5474.

H.B. 5474 will increase autonomy of Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA). We believe that it is critical that ratepayers have full confidence in regulatory decisions of the PURA. In order to ensure that confidence there should not even be the appearance that the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) is trying to influence regulatory policy. Additionally AARP would recommend a change to remove PURA completely from DEEP, which would break all ties, including for administrative purposes.

AARP recognizes that when Public Act 11-80 reorganized the former Department of Public Utility Control and the Department of Environmental Protection there was the intent to create a policy division of the new DEEP. This policy division is a critical step that AARP fully supports. We believe however, that the best way to regulate utilities is to have an autonomous PURA get recommendations from the policy division of DEEP and weigh those recommendations when making a ruling. Currently the DEEP seems to have the final say over the rulings of PURA. Making PURA completely autonomous will ensure the integrity of the ratemaking process and restore ratepayers' confidence that decisions made by PURA are in the best interest of consumers.

AARP also supports the proposed investigation into the regulation of propane (Sec. 14). Consumers in rural areas and in mobile home communities often rely on propane for home heating. However, the industry is unregulated and consumers do not have the same protections as customers of other types of home heat, such as natural gas and electricity.

AARP supports the creation of a Division of Enforcement within PURA found in section 17 of the bill. Creating rules and regulations means nothing if they are not or cannot be enforced. This new Division would be able to conduct investigations and hearings to support any investigation of entities such as any public service company, electric supplier, certified telecommunications provider, public utility and Connecticut electric efficiency partner to be in violation of rules or regulations meant to protect consumers.

AARP urges support for HB 5474 with our additional recommendation of removing PURA from DEEP even for administrative purposes. Thank you.